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DAN SMOOT

MORE PUEBLOS

In October, 1966, North Korean Premier Kim Il Sung told the Korean communist party central committee to prepare the country for war. He said that all of Korea must be united under communist domination and that this could be accomplished only by armed force.

Overt acts of war against the U.S. and South Korea soon began. On November 2, 1966, North Korean soldiers ambushed and killed six Americans and one South Korean in the southern half of the demilitarized zone.

During 1967, North Korean communists made more than 450 sneak assaults in, and south of, the demilitarized zone, killing 139 Americans and South Koreans, wounding 294. During that year, two American camps were shot up, trains were sabotaged, and a South Korean patrol boat in South Korean waters was sunk.

During 1968, North Korean sneak attacks killed 62 American and South Korean soldiers, wounded 130, and killed and wounded several South Korean police and civilians. The two most notable incidents of 1968 occurred in January. During the night of January 21, 1968, 31 North Korean commandos slipped through the demilitarized zone and got within 800 yards of the presidential mansion in Seoul, before they were discovered. Their mission was to assassinate the South Korean President. Thirty-six hours later, North Korean gun boats seized the U.S.S. *Pueblo* in international waters in the Sea of Japan.[1]

The South Korean government pleaded with the Johnson administration to retaliate against the communists for their repeated, bloody violations of the Korean armistice agreements of 1953. Johnson did nothing.

The outcome of the *Pueblo* affair is now known to the world. The Johnson administration finally ransomed the *Pueblo* crew with a bald-faced lie (falsely confessing that the ship had deliberately violated North Korean territorial waters, abjectly apologizing for an offense that was never committed) — after

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our men had been subjected to 11 months of bestial treatment at the hands of communist barbarians.

Far more than American pride was damaged by the disgraceful *Pueblo* incident. The vital security of our nation was deeply compromised. Without a change of policy in Washington, American servicemen would be fair game whenever in range of communist guns, with no hope of protection from their own government.

The people were anxious and angry.

In his acceptance speech to the Republican Convention at Miami on August 8, 1968, Richard M. Nixon said:

"For four years, this Administration has had at its disposal the greatest military and economic advantage that one nation has ever had over another in a war in history. For four years, America's fighting men have set a record for courage and sacrifice unsurpassed in our history . . . .

"Never has so much military and economic and diplomatic power been used so ineffectively. And if after all this time, and all of this sacrifice, and all of this support, there is still no end in sight, then I say the time has come for the American people to turn to new leadership not tied to the mistakes and policies of the past. That is what we offer to America . . . .

"We shall restore the strength of America so that we shall always negotiate from strength and never from weakness . . . .

"For five years hardly a day has gone by when we haven't read and heard a report of the American flag being spit on, and our embassy being stoned, a library being burned, or an ambassador being insulted some place in the world, and each incident reduced respect for the United States until the ultimate insult inevitably occurred.

"And I say to you tonight that when respect for the United States of America falls so low that a fourth-rate military power like Korea will seize an American naval vessel in the high seas, it's time for new leadership to restore respect for the United States of America."

That brought Nixon the most thunderous and sustained ovation he received during his acceptance speech. When it subsided, he said:

"My friends, America is a great nation. It is time we started to act like a great nation around the world."

During the campaign, Nixon said:

"Unless the United States reacts to those small slights, you are bound to encourage bigger slights and you're going to have more *Pueblos.* And in a new administration, I say we've got to stop that kind of action against the United States before it gets started."[2]

On April 15, 1969, North Korea — that "fourth-rate military power" — shot down a slow-moving, propeller-driven, unarmed U.S. Navy reconnaissance plane (an EC 121) over the Sea of Japan, not far from where the U.S.S. *Pueblo* was seized in January, 1968. The plane was on a routine monitoring flight, out of Japan, under strict orders never to get closer than 40 miles to the nearest point of North Korean land. Apparently, the crew detected the oncoming attack and notified its command headquarters at Atsugi, Japan. On orders from that command, the plane aborted its mission and headed further out to sea, but was overtaken by the faster, Russian-built North Korean jets.

Our plane scrupulously respected North Korean air space throughout its flight. Radar proves this. In fact, our technology for radar scanning is so good that we *know* what the North Korean and Soviet radar equipment showed: it showed that the plane was over international waters throughout its flight, never anywhere near penetrating North Korean territory.

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First news of the event came from an official North Korean radio broadcast which said that a "reconnaissance plane of the insolent U.S. imperialist aggressor army . . was reconnoitering after intruding deep into the territorial air of the northern half of the republic," and that the North Korean air force "scored the brilliant battle success of shooting it down with a single shot at high altitude."[3]

A few hours later, North Koreans demanded a meeting with U.S. representatives at the "Truce Village" in Korea where we have had 290 fruitless meetings with them since the Korean armistice of 1953. At first, President Nixon declined; but Dr. Henry Kissinger said our refusal might give the communists a pretext to reject some future American request. Nixon authorized the meeting, which was held on April 18.

Since the communists had asked for the meeting, they had the privilege of speaking first. The North Korean representative did not even mention the shooting down of our plane. Instead, he accused the U.S. of breaking Korean cease-fire agreements.

Major General James B. Knapp, U.S. Air Force officer, replied by denouncing the attack on our plane. Getting no response, he walked out of the meeting.

For three-and-a-half days, President Nixon made no public statement about the airplane incident, but his spokesmen worked hard to create an atmosphere of calm. It was reported that Nixon had asked the Soviets to help us search for the downed plane. They cooperated. On April 16, a Soviet destroyer found airplane wreckage on the sea about 85 miles off the North Korean coast. A few hours later and a few miles away, an American destroyer found other wreckage and the bodies of two of the 31 crewmen who had been aboard the plane.

On April 16, Secretary of State William Rogers made a speech in Washington. He did not mention the shooting down of our plane (which had occurred the day before), but he explained the Nixon administration's Orwellian theory that strength is weakness. Secretary Rogers said:

"In international affairs, the weak can be rash; the powerful must be restrained . . . .

"One lesson is quite clear. Great power does not mean great freedom of action and decision. On the contrary, it often means very narrow choices of action, and what we can do to influence events in a given case may well be marginal."[4]

Thus, we are impotent because we are strong. That extraordinary attitude became the hallmark of the Nixon administration, even before the administration was officially installed; and it is the exact opposite of the attitude that Nixon assumed in bidding for votes last year.

During the political campaign, Nixon said that communist nations, in committing atrocities against America, were testing American power — "not the quantity of American power, but its credibility and utility." Nixon explained that the credibility of our power is the "linchpin of our alliances, and it stands behind all the commitments that keep global peace." The foundation of our global strategy, Nixon said, is the general conviction that we have adequate power and that we will use it when our vital interests are under attack.[5]

Candidate Nixon promised in 1968 to strive to regain American nuclear superiority over the Soviets, so that we could always "negotiate from strength" with communists. Immediately after becoming President, he repudiated that stand. Now, he accepts the present balance of power, which (on the basis of his political criticism of the Democrats for letting American military power degenerate) means American inferiority in weaponry and defense. During his trip to Europe shortly after his inauguration, President Nixon told NATO nations that the West no longer has, and will not seek, predominance of nuclear power. Instead, he said, his administration will try to have strategic arms-control talks with the Soviets to "codify the present balance."[4]

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At a news conference on April 18, 1969, President Nixon discussed the EC 121 incident. He said the North Koreans and the Soviets know positively, as well as we do, that the plane never penetrated North Korean air space. He said a protest had been filed, but no response had been made. He refused to say more, in the absence of a response from the communists.

He said the reconnaissance flights had been stopped immediately after the incident, but had been renewed because they are necessary to the security of American troops in South Korea. He said if he had known the plane was in danger, he would not have let it go on the mission without protection; and he promised protection for all future flights of this kind.

The President declined to say what kind of protection. Reports indicated that heavy U.S. naval units were being moved into the Sea of Japan. Are we to tie up a substantial part of our Pacific fleet to protect our unarmed aircraft from one "fourth-rate military power"? Forcing us to divert that much naval power from other missions is a major victory for North Korea.

It is difficult to see what other protection can be given. Fighter jets cannot feasibly fly escort for low-altitude, slow-moving, propeller-driven planes. There have been reports that we will have fighters stationed on call where they can fly to the defense of a reconnaissance plane that comes under attack. Where will they be stationed? We have jet fighters now at all our Pacific bases. We are told that none of them had time to get to the EC 121 before it was shot down.

On April 19, 1969, President Nixon was reported to have told congressional leaders he "means to go beyond the mere accompaniment of the intelligence craft by fighters and warships." The congressional leaders are said to have reported that the President "will order drastic retaliation, without warning, for any future attack on U.S. intelligence ships or planes."(6)

After the President's mild-mannered, non-committal public pronouncement about the EC 121 incident, the communists are not likely to pay much attention to a warning attributed to unnamed sources and reported at third hand.

Nothing but sudden, massive retaliation against North Korea will give us any protection in Asia, and discourage communist atrocities against us elsewhere. That retaliation should be coordinated with a sudden all-out attack on North Vietnam, to knock out that "fourth-rate military power," and stop the loss of American lives. The Republic of Free China should also be given our blessing to move against the Chinese mainland, when and if it pleases.

President Nixon will not take such action, but Congress could force his hand by declaring war on both North Vietnam and North Korea.

FOOTNOTES

(1) *The Dallas Times Herald*, April 17, 1969, p. 1
(2) Editorial, *The Dallas Morning News*, April 17, 1969
(3) *The Wall Street Journal*, April 18, 1969, pp. 1, 12
(4) *The Wall Street Journal*, April 17, 1969, p. 1; *The Wall Street Journal*, April 18, 1969, p. 14
(5) Editorial, *The Dallas Morning News*, April 18, 1969
(6) *The Dallas Times Herald*, April 20, 1969, p. 1

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